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SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS

INFORMANT: JENNIFER E. KEMP
INTERVIEWER: KELLY MCGRATH
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K = KELLY
J = JENNIFER

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Tape begins with interviewer: Hi, my name is Kelly McGrath and I will be interviewing Jen Kemp on her feelings towards North Adams.

K: Where were your grandparents born and raised?

J: Well my grandfather was born and raised in Blackenton here in North Adams. And he attended the old Drury High School, which is now Middle School. And he's been raised in North Adams and he still lives here and is now retired.

My grandmother was, or my first grandmother was also born in North Adams and she grew up in North Adams as well. Attended schools here. And my second grandmother, after my first grandmother past away, she was born in Williamstown and attended Williamstown Public Schools and then Mt. Greylock. And worked in Williamstown and then married my grandfather here in Williamstown.

K: Okay. [Comment unclear] Were your parents also born and raised in North Adams, or in the area?

J: Well my mother was born in North Adams and she was also raised here. She lived over in Blackenton where my grandfather [few words unclear] and he was first married. And my father, I'm not exactly sure where he was born. But I believe he was born in Louisiana. That's where I lived when I was um, a baby up until about two years old. So I would imagine that he was born in Louisiana and raised down on the southern [unclear]

K: When did he move to the northern Berkshire area?

J: Um, I was about two. So it was probably, I believe it was August 1973 probably, because it was just before my sister was born. So we've been here for most of my life.

K: Now where do your parents work and what do they do?

J: Well my mother works at the Orchard and she is, I guess they call her line cook, I'm not sure, but she does a lot of chef cooking and things like that. And she did a lot with the working of the hotel. And my father is now continuing his education down in Louisiana, or Mississippi, excuse me. He's finishing up his college degree. So he's really not working per se right now. He's just trying to finish his education.

K: Do they plan to live, does your Mom plan to live in North Adams? [Comment unclear]

J: For what I know she would like to stay here for the rest of her life, because she really, um, she was brought up here and she just kind of been sticking around. And anywhere else that she's gone, whereas though she lived in Louisiana, she didn't like that as much as she did here. And from my own knowledge I'd say she's probably going to stay. And I say my Dad is probably going to stay down in Louisiana, Mississippi area, because he's always been brought up there and he really likes it down there.

K: So were you, you obviously were born in Louisiana?

J: Yeah, umhm.

K: Did you attend North Adams Public Schools after you moved here?

J: Yes I did. Um, I went to Mark Hopkins School for elementary school, which was um, a part of the North Adams State College, which was primarily used as kind of an experiment center for a lot of students that were going out into the teaching force. And primarily for [unclear] in North Adams that wanted to have the hands-on experience. And then I went to the North Adams Middle School for a secondary education, and now I'm a senior at Drury High School.

K: What work experience have you had in this area?

J: Oh, in this area, okay. Um, last [K: unclear] summer I worked at the orchards and I was a bus person, which I didn't exactly like a lot. It's not so much the job that I didn't like, it's just that I ended up doing a lot of work that other people should have been doing themselves.

K: So you had a lot of responsibilities?

J: Yeah, I did. Um, and it's not that I didn't like the responsibility, it's just what I was getting paid for doing and what I was getting stepped on for doing were not exactly, not exactly right. Um, and then I worked in North Adams at Dr. [unclear] office for a couple of months, but because of family circumstances I had to stop working there. And I've been working since January at the Williamstown Youth Center as an assistant to [name unclear]. Um, she's doing some for United Cerebral Palsy, working with special needs students. And I work with her. And from April I have been work... doing some secretarial work for Karen [unclear] two days a week. So I'm [unclear] four days a week [unclear].

K: Great. And your job affected your perception of North Adams, or the area at all do you think?

J: Um, well considering that three out of the four jobs that I've had have been in Williamstown it's hard for me to really discuss anything with relevancy to North Adams. Um, (-)

K: What about the area in general?

J: Well the area in general, I would just say that there are a lot of things and a lot of different people that I didn't realize existed. Like especially working with special needs now. And I guess this is a little bit off of the question, but working with special needs has really taught me that you don't have to be "normal" to be special. And I think that the word special needs really is a special word in itself, because the people that I have worked with um, all have some kind of "handicap". And I've just really learned that they really are special people and they can do a lot of things that I never would have imagined. Things that I can't even do myself. And everyday I go into work it's, I just find something new about them. Like we have um, we have one student who is blind. And he's just incredible. He's, today he just had a record goal of twenty baskets at the Youth Center. And you know, and it only took him like thirty-five minutes. [K: Yes] And of course he can't see. But you know, we help him at the basket and we help you know, to direct him around. [K: Help him aim] Yeah, we help him with his aim. But it's just incredible. And he plays some of the video games. And he's an excellent [freeze?] ball player. He even plays pool, which is more than I can do. [K: Oh my god!] And you know, it's just things like this that I really, really have really gotten to know differences in different people. And the attitudes of people are just, are really great there. I really like it.

K: Do you think there's like any special qualities that people in North Adams have? Like how your perception, how you view people of North Adams?

J: Um, I think people of North Adams um, well I have two, I have two opinions of people of North Adams. I think there are a lot of people who work really hard and really work for the things that they've done and they're very proud of them. But I think there's also a segment and I wouldn't say that it's nearly as large as the segment that works really hard, but living in some of the places that I've lived I've seen a group of people that really don't care about what happens to North Adams, what happens to themselves, or what happens to their children, or anything to do with them. They just don't care. And that's a part of North Adams that I don't like to see, but for probably five years I lived in it and I guess that's why I wasn't home a lot of the time, because I didn't like what I saw. But um, but there was another part of North Adams that I went to that I did see where the people loved what they were doing and loved the people that they were with. And really appreciated that. And I think that that's I guess what we have to look at more.

K: Yeah. Um, how do you think job opportunities for teenagers in North Adams compare to those in other cities and states?

J: Um, it's hard to say, because I haven't really worked in other states. I've obviously worked in Williamstown, which is another city, but I think that where ever you go I think there's a lot of

exploitation, which I think is totally absurd. Um, student have to go to school. And I don't think that it's necessary for the amount of students that work, to work, because I think that they just (--)

K: For the amount of time that they work.

J: Exactly, exactly. I think a lot of students should be spending more time on say homework, or even social events than working, because I think you know, that's ridiculous the amount that they work. And I just think from my own experience that a lot of the employers out there are saying, "oh here's a teenager, let's exploit him or her, and let's get the best we can until they have to leave." And I think that you're going to get that in any community, but I saw that especially in Williamstown where I work. Because as I previously stated, I worked as a bus person and I even complained to my boss that other people were not doing the work that they were suppose to do. And you know, he would say something like, "well he's not old enough." But I would say to myself, "well if he can't do the work then why did you hire him?"

K: Right.

J: And so that was very difficult for me. So I would just say in summation that a lot of the job opportunities around here are, I think they're good for teenagers, but I also think that they're bad because I don't think they are given respect, or paid I don't think either what they deserve.

K: Um, do you have many other aunts, uncles, cousins or other relatives that live in this area?

J: Um, people with my last name [K: right], I'm the only one left. Um, my sister just recently moved down to Mississippi to live with um, our grandmother. But on my mother's side of the family most of us are up here. My grandfather lives up here and my second grandmother also. My grandfather's two of three sisters live here, the other lived in California. Um, but we have a lot of cousins that are out in outer parts of Massachusetts, but they're in the Berkshire area. And my second grandmother's children, nieces, nephews and all of the above all live pretty much in the Berkshires. So most of my family is up here.

K: And most of it is centered in North Adams basically?

J: Yeah, I would (--) Um, actually no. I think more of it is centered in Williamstown I would say, [K: umhm] and up in Vermont. Um, but we do have, we do have a lot of relatives in North Adams. So they're, between the two communities we've got a lot in both places.

K: What one thing about living in North Adams, or Williamstown has benefited you the most do you feel?

J: Oh boy! Let's see. That's a hard one. Um, one thing. I guess I would have to say some of the people, which is kind of ironic because I think a lot of times I have a negative attitude about some of the people of the city. But from my circumstances and the situation that I come from I've really gained a lot of encouragement, whether it be um, from a band director, or someone that I babysit for, a relative or a friend, I've just really gained a lot of encouragement and knowledge that they really are there for me. And whenever I have something, or if I have any

accomplishment, or if I have a problem I know that there's always somebody here to come to. And that has probably affected me the most and it's helped me to become the person that I have. Because I know that if those people hadn't been there I don't know where I'd be right now.

K: What has been the least rewarding about living here?

J: Um, [K: there's a list] [both chuckle] yeah, there's quite a list actually. I think one of the things that disappoints me the most is the lack of activities here in North Adams. I realize that there are a lot of things that can be done, but you know, if you don't like bowling or you don't want to pay six dollars to go to the movies you know, or the skating rink is not open because it's not wintertime, you know there really isn't a whole lot for kids to do except "hang around". And I'm not the kind of person that likes to really just hang around. I mean I'll go out and drive with my friends and just kind of drive up and down Main Street, but that's [K: comment unclear] yeah, that's the extent of our eventful evening. [K: Yeah] So that, that's been really least rewarding I would say. Because there isn't really a whole lot here that really helps us to find a lot of things to do.

K: I mean you can't even sit in Burger King just to talk, because they're kick you out too.

J: I know. That's terrible. It really is awful. I remember um, I was out with a couple of my friends a few years ago Holly was one of them actually. [K: umhm] And we were walking down Main Street and I don't remember, it was really late. It must have been after a basketball game or something. And there was a group of about four or five of us and we were just walking down Main Street. And Holly and I were fooling around. And I pushed her and she started to fall, and then she did fall on the ground. And she came up and she started yelling at me, but she was only joking. And this cop crossed the street and he said, "what are you doing here? Why are you out here? Where are your parents?" And I said, "we're going to the phone to call our parents." And he's like, "well I don't want any ruckus." And we were just being you know, [K: yeah] teenagers having a good time. And we weren't doing anything wrong. We were just walking down the street. I didn't know there was a law against that. And um, so we went and we called our parents. And he followed us there. Now that to me was totally ridiculous, because you know, when you can't even trust a group of people that are probably the biggest givers to the community, [K: yeah] I mean that's pretty sad. And he waited there until we called our parents. Then he crossed the street and stared at us until we got into my other friend Nora's car. Now that's terrible if you ask me.

K: That's happened to me before with some of my friends. It's ridiculous.

J: It really, it's really terrible. It's you know.

K: Or those people, old people, they never would have done it.

J: Oh I know, but if it's a group of old people or you know, or even like I mean I don't mean old like, you know, retired, [K: yeah] but just I don't know, [K: forties] what you call "respect" in age, you know? If they're respected people in the community you know, they don't, they don't even look twice at that. Oh, they're doing fine, you know. [K: How are you doing?] Yeah, how

are you doing? Exactly. Have a good day and uh, see you tomorrow. So. I also have to make a comment on um, this is one, another thing that really bothers me. Is that respect is really bad here I think. And maybe it's elsewhere too. [K: Umhm] But being a teenager and being a young adult has really been difficult, because you just are not given nearly the amount of respect that adults are. When some teenagers or young adults deserve more respect than the adults that are getting more than the young people. And I, I remember so many incidences being in line and having an adult behind me, and the sales clerk saying, "may I help you sir." You know, it's like do I even exist? You know, I was here first. I waited the same amount of time. I paid the same money. I earned it the same way that they did and I mean granted, we are all known for rabble rousing and you know, things like that, but still we are people and we are human, and we deserve the same respect at least. Maybe not the same rights, but at least the same respect as other people. And I think that's, that's been pretty bad. And I think with the police officer it was the same thing. [K: Yeah] He didn't respect us, or trust us. [K: Umhm] But if it were a thirty or forty year old group of people there would have been no problem.

K: Would have been no problem. How has living in North Adams affected your views socially towards services like welfare, food stamps, and other programs? I know we talked about this in history class briefly one day.

J: Yeah, I know. We did a lot. Um, well I can, I can talk from probably three different views. First of all, um, from when I was little um, when we first moved up here my mother was working two jobs and she had my sister and I. And we were on food stamps for I don't even know how long, but it was only a few months. And it was, I mean we didn't abuse it and I knew that we didn't abuse it. You know, we used it for food and not you know, other things. And that was good. And when I was young you know, I thought gee, all of these food stamps are really great, you know? You know, you can go down the store and buy everything you have to buy. And you know, of course my Mom was the one that understood everything. And even though she was working two jobs and working as hard as she could she still just couldn't seem to make it. And um, but now that I've grown up I seem to see more abuse of it than real usage. But I don't want to condone or condemn food stamps and welfare, because I think it's a good program. But I seem to have seen more abuse of it than you know, good using of it. I lived um, on [Braceball Ave?] before I moved here to Williamstown. Well actually we moved elsewhere first, but um, and a lot of the groups of people there were of poor I would say, decent. And not so much that they had to be poor, but it seemed to me like they chose it, because they were the kind of people you know, cashing in their food stamps for cigarettes, or alcohol, or drugs, which I thought was really bad. And then you see these little kids running around on a street with barely any clothes on, that aren't clean, that you know are malnourished and incorrectly fed. Not taking care of, always yelled at. And these are the kind of things that the government provides these food stamps and welfare for. And in that sense I really saw abused in places like that. But I still think, which is contradictory to a lot of views that it is a good program. And I think that there are a lot of people that do take advantages of them. And like I say, from being a part of a family that did use them wisely, you know, they were a good help and haven't been for a long time. And that was just the extra push to get my mother going and to be able to get her on to her feet. But you know, I do think there are you know, some penny loafers out there that you know, sit and say, "well if I can collect welfare."

K: Um. Sit down and say, "I'll make more money collecting welfare than working."

J: Exactly! Exactly. Which is, which is really sad. But um, in programs like WIC I don't really know a whole lot about that, but I know that's another form of, of governmental aid or something. But I would imagine that that works pretty well. I knew somebody that was on that once and I didn't really see any abuse in that. And I think even more so that that is kind of even more important, because that's when the kids are even more young and need even more nourishment than say you know, when they're a little bit older. I'm not really sure of what to think about that, because I've seen both sides. But I'd like to say that it works really well and it's a beneficial thing, but I think that might be too, too idealistic.

K: Yeah, there's still some abuses. [J: Yeah, I think so too] There are always people that will abuse something else.

J: Umhm. That's true. That's true.

K: Has living in North Adams affected your views on moral issues like abortion, or euthanasia, or capital punishment, and the war on drugs?

J: Um, I wouldn't really say living in North Adams per se has affected my views on that. I think that a lot of my views stem from my own religious beliefs and not so much moral issues that were, say dictated to us by North Adams standards or what not. Um, and I think that a lot of my stands are from studies and things like that that we've had to do for school. Mr. Pecora papers, and Mrs. England papers, and you know, and I've done one on every single one of those. Um, but I think more of my knowledge and views on those is probably gained from my own investigation and not so muchy North Adams. [K: Umhm] But um, and abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment I really don't, haven't really seen a whole lot of in North Adams. But I've really seen a lot of drug dealing and I don't really know about a war on drugs, because you know, we don't really live in a community where that is really prevalent. But I have seen a lot of problems where drugs have been involved and I can say that you know, it's, living in North Adams has made me very leery of thinks like that. I mean living in a big city obviously would make me even more so. But I mean even, even up at Drury High School, when I first went up there you know, I was told "oh gee, there's drugs everywhere. People are going to be pushing drugs and alcohol down your throat." And I was kind of scared about it, you know? And, but then it didn't seem to be true. But then this year I just, my eyes were just opened to so many different people that did drugs that I never would even imagine. [K: yeah] I mean I even seen drug deals at the school and you know, that's, that's really disappointing to see in in a city, but I know that you're going to get that just about everywhere.

K: And it seems like a nice, small, unaffected community where nobody is going to use drugs.

J: Exactly. Umhm.

K: So do you think there's a problem then like in Drury, or in North Adams with the drugs?

J: Yeah, I, I definitely think so. Um, I think that getting back to the working thing, I wonder

now if the reason a lot of kids work is to support their habits, whether it be drugs or alcohol. [K: Umhm] Because I think that for any average student in out, probably I would say maybe four out of five, well maybe three out of five who work probably spend about 75% of their income on, not so much drugs, but definitely alcohol. [K: Yeah] And maybe so drugs. I would say the percentage would be a lot lower. But, and that's really scary, because you know, this is our generation. It's coming up you know. [K: Yeah] And just from such a small community when you see so much in such a small group, I mean what do you see in the world? So it's kind of scary, but I think, I think it is a problem. And I think that the, the film that we saw the other day, "Eddy", I don't think that it affected a lot of people in the sense that unless you've been through it, or know somebody that has, it doesn't really touch you. Which is unfortunate because I think there are a lot of kids in our school that are going through it, but just don't want to realize it because it's not the cool thing to do. [K: Umhm] Or because you know, peer pressure, you know. So um, but I'd say it's definitely a problem that needs to be looked at and done something about.

K: What kind of programs would you like to see maybe to help kids rid the drug problem, or alcohol problem?

J: Um, well in (--) I know that, and I can't say any names, because it's part of the rules there, but I belong to a group that's in school. It's not exactly an [Alateen?], because both of my parents are alcoholics, and, but it's a group of students who are, are living or have lived under circumstances that are not suitable for healthy growing up. And there are a lot of kids in this, in that group where they live in the, I mean their lives are hell, literally. You know, they come home, their parents are drunk. Their parents are drugged up. And they have no place to go. And I um, am a little different than them in the sense that I did get help and that's why I'm living with my grandparents. And um, there is a group like that. And I think that it's helped a lot of people. And I know that it's really helped me. I mean I miss classes, that's good too, but um the affect that it has had has really, really been super. And I think that also my being in that group has given some of the kids in there strength. You know, I don't want to sound like a hero or anything, but kind of given them some kind of hope at the end of the tunnel, [K: umhm] saying you know, there really is hope here. And I think that if there was a bigger program like that, or that if more people attended things like that [K: umhm, there's more support], exactly, a lot more support. I don't think that very many people (--) Like I (--) Did you even know about that? [K: No] I would say probably one out of five know that it even exists. And they're probably only the people that are in there.

K: Is it with the guidance, Miss French?

J: Um, well Mrs. French the Adjustment Counselor, she pretty much runs it. And they do, what they do is they have, they usually pick one period out of the day for eight weeks, and they go once a week. And it's just like a support group that goes each week. And um you know, like I say, and it's probably good that a lot of people don't know about it, because I think that if a lot of people did know about it I think a lot of people would be made fun of, or given crap for it. [K: Right] And you know, I think that's another problem area where I think that peer pressure needs to be definitely decreased and understanding has to be increased. Because a lot of people don't understand the problems that other people have and it's like you're an automatic freak if you go

to something like this, you know? [K: Umhm, yeah. (Unclear)] And a lot of kids think that. Or either that, or you're a grub because you go to a meeting like that. I mean I don't consider myself a grub and I don't consider the other, a lot of the other kids that are in that group. But I have to say that before I got in that group and the first day that I was there, when I got in there I said, "oh my gosh I'm in with a bunch of dirt balls." You know? And they're people too. And I've really gotten to know a couple of them really well. And they're just people that are dealing with problems that are not their fault and are beyond their control. And I think that um, people especially in our school should know that and should come to an understanding that there are problems. And that these people have a lot of guts and a lot of courage going for help. [K: Yeah] Because it takes an awful lot more courage to go for help than to sweep it under the rug.

K: Do you think there are some people out there that don't, like at Drury who don't know about the program that might benefit from it?

J: That might benefit from it? I would say a lot. Um, it's hard to say. I mean I couldn't like point out a specific person or group of people, but I think there are a lot of people out there like I used to be that are really shy and really quiet and don't want anybody to know. [K: Right] That was my biggest problem. I didn't want anybody to know about anything. I didn't want people to know that I was, excuse me, being in with this group that was having a problem. I didn't want anybody to know that I wasn't perfect. [K: Umhm] And I didn't want anybody to know that I had a problem. But the thing is that it's not my problem. It's my parent's problem. And that's what a lot of kids don't realize. And I think that if there was some kind of an awareness program that showed them that it's not them that has the problem, and that it's not their fault, and that people aren't going to breathe down their, their necks, [K: right] you know, for going to this kind of meeting, I think that there would be, I would say that the group would probably at least double. And I, I can guarantee that they would certainly benefit. Even from just one meeting. Because the things that are said there don't come out of the meeting and aren't said to anybody else, but they're still floating around in your head. And no matter what you do (--) It's like when you go to church. You know, if you want to go to church, fine. And if you don't want to listen, well you sit there and you don't listen. [K: Yeah] But still the words are up there. And they're still back there somewhere. And it's just like these meetings. And eventually they'll out. So I think , I think people would really benefit.

K: Thanks. I'm sure there are a lot of kids who are afraid to admit it, but can definitely use the help.

J: Definitely. Definitely, yup. That's for sure.

K: What are you most proud of in North Adams?

J: [Chuckles] Oh!

K: That's a toughy.

J: Well let's see. I wasn't ready for this one. Um, most proud of. Hm. That's a hard one. Um, I'd say accomplishments that people have made. I think that this place is, and I don't really hear

a lot about it from other communities, and I think that if there were people like the people that we have here, we would hear about it. But I think a lot of students, and I say students in particular, have really accomplished a lot of things that a lot of other places don't have. Like, this years academic decathlon. I mean you guys just went all the way. I mean that is really super. And how many other schools you know, right around. I mean where was Greylock? You know. [K: Umhm] Where was Lacona? You know. They just, I mean I just think that we have a lot of bright people and intelligent students who sometimes go unrecognized. And I know from the music department I know that we have some, some really good players and I think that they have all been, I include myself in this group, have really accomplished a lot of things. And, like the band parents, and the community has really been susceptive and really supportive of us group of students. And I think it's that kind of thing that makes us you know, push on. And those are the kinds of things we have to be proud of. Um, let's see. Like I'm just trying to think of anything that would in conjunction to that. But um, I just know that there are, there really are a lot of people in the community that do really well. Like Eileen, I know, of course she lives on Florida Mountain, but she's, I would still consider her as part, her a part of our community. And you know, she gets a lot of awards and things. And like a lot of the kids in our class, and not even the top say ten, [K: umhm] or whatever, they're still getting awards. You know, student of the month. Or being invited down to Rotary Luncheon, or just special things like that. Being invited here and there for certain awards. Getting nominated to say the McDonald's All American Band, or you know, things like that that just make each of us special. I think that that's something to be proud of I think, that we all have a lot to contribute.

K: Umhm. What are you least proud of?

J: Uh, I would say a combination of things to do and programs. [K: Umhm] Um, like I said before. There really isn't a lot for us to do around here. And that's not something to be proud of. Because I think that we are a community that could be doing something. But I think we're wasting a lot of our money on things that (a) are not being very productive, and (b) just not plain working. Where we could spend it on different things that could be done to provide activities. Not just for the young people, but for the older people too. I mean how many people do you know, or say housewives as an example, just sit around and have nothing to do. I mean they have housework and all that kind of stuff, but when they're all done with that stuff, what can you do? I mean nothing. Or when you come home from you know, from work and, and you want to do something with your family, what constructive can you do. You can go to the bowling alley, but even sometimes there it's either half filled with smoke, or totally filled with people. [K: Right] And it's hard to find just the right environment to go to do something that you really want to do.

K: Right. [Few word unclear] so expensive that [J: exactly] it's going to break you.

J: I mean you can't even take a whole family to a movie anymore without paying twenty dollars. [K: Yeah] I mean a family of four, that's with movies and popcorn and candy and everything, that twenty dollars right there. [K: expensive, yeah] You know a nice (--) You might as well go out for dinner and pay a little bit more. [K: umhm] Um, so I think that's, that's really, that's really hard here and I'm not, not very proud of that, because I think we could do a lot better. Um, and I think for programs here, I mean kind of in a sense of not totally rehabilitation, but I think a

lot with that. Because I think North Adams has a lot of problems, although we do have a lot of good things too, but I think that the programs we have are both looked down upon and not sufficient. They're aren't enough and there's not enough encouragement for a lot of people. There is encouragement for some, but I think there needs to be a little bit more and that could be improved upon a little bit.

K: Um, do you have pride in your community, and do you think that the people in the community have more or less pride than you do?

J: Um, (--)

K: It seems like a little of both depending on the issues I would guess.

J: Yeah. If somebody came up to me and asked me where I was from, I would tell them North Adams. And they always say, "is that anywhere near Boston?" And I say, "no, of course not." [K: Yeah]

Boston seems to be the only city in Massachusetts. But um, I mean I wouldn't say that I would brag about it, but and I find myself a lot of times putting it down. But I think that that's unfair too. Because it is the community that I live in. And I get out of it what I put in it. [K: Right] Um, you know, I wouldn't go bragging about it. There's nothing in my opinion that is really totally spectacular. And there's not a whole lot that you know, really just jumps into my mind [K: Hm] and says, "hey, this is this." But um, and I think that people probably, I probably am more proud of my community than a lot of people. I think a lot of people look really down at North Adams, because other people from other communities do. [K: Okay] Like um, I don't know. No, I won't even say that, because that's terrible. I live here now, but just to use as an example. You know, a lot of people from Williamstown look down at North Adams because of it's high crime rate, or it's high [K: pregnancy rate] pregnancy. But I, you know, if you take percentage wise I think that North Adams is just like Williamstown. And I think using Williamstown as an example, I think that maybe because it's a richer community, maybe those people can just cover it up a little bit better than we can. You know, and also North Adams is a lot bigger than Williamstown. Williamstown is a town. North Adams is a city. And if you take percentage wise I would think that the percentage wise would be very close. Um, so I think that a lot of people also get their opinions like I say, from other people. Like a North Adams student who is friends with a Greylock student who is always putting North Adams down is obviously not going to have a whole lot of pride in his or her community. [K: Yeah] I mean that's just not going to happen.

K: It's easier for us to dump on North Adams, [J: Exactly] but when somebody else does [J: Right, or like with a brother or sister, you know] then we get offended. Right.

J: You know, you can beat your brother or sister to a pulp, but boy when somebody else says a one slight wrong word about them you might as well forget it. So um, I do have pride in my community, but I think that I would have a lot me if there was more [unclear].

K: Yeah. When I went to Providence [unclear] some girl she happened to be looking through my sheets. I wanted to change the dorms in the residence thing, and she's like, "oh, you're from

North Adams? I have some friends that go to North Adams State. [J: Oh my gosh!] She said, it's a pretty hick town up there." I was like, "yeah I guess so." [Both laugh] Everybody associates you know, hick town. Even when they come up from like [unclear] Pittsfield.

J: I know, exactly.

K: You know, "oh, this place is a hick town."

J: That's true, that's true. One thing I noticed, we just went to Canada with our band trip. And maybe this is a national problem and not so much community, but we would drive for a minute and I saw literally, we counted at one point in a minute, I think I saw like thirty eight. Canadian flags. [K: Umhm] I mean that's just in a minute. That's not even a mile. We saw thirty eight Canadian flags. I mean that to me just shows pride in their, in their country [K: in their country], in the city itself. We were in Toronto. And I realize Toronto is a lot bigger. But we must have seen at least three or four hundred flags in that city alone. And we didn't go in the whole city. We only stayed in a, in a pretty central location. And around here there really isn't you know, I can think of maybe six or seven American flags in North Adams and Williamstown combined. And that's, that's pretty sad when you compare it to another country with just a minute of driving. [K: right] And so I think in that sense our pride is, is not that great, you know. We always talk about, "we are Americans, we are super powers, we are number one", as we were just discussing, but yeah, I don't really see a lot of that pride in things like the American flag, or you know, things like that. We're just (--) Or even the Pledge of Allegiance. It's like, in our school, [K: yeah] as you know, it's a big joke, you know? And I mean sometimes I say it and sometimes I don't. [K: Right] And I don't think that that's just students "rebelling" or anything like that. But I think that it's not really taught to us that we're suppose to say the Pledge of Allegiance because we have to be prideful of our country, you know? Whereas I think other places really um, really uh, kind of really teach that strongly. I mean if you went to Canada and had them, I don't know what they have, but Pledge of Allegiance to Canada, they would probably have students just pop up and recite it just like that. [K: Yeah] Um, when I was in the seventh grade um, we had Mr. Doughton for our teacher and our assignment in class was to write down the Pledge of Allegiance on a piece of paper. Write it down. Don't say it, just totally write it down. And there was one person in the class of over twenty kids who got every single word right. [K: Umhm] That was it. I mean that's, [K: that's unbelievable] that's really really sad. It, I, I was the only one that knew them. And it, that was even after a lot of struggling and changing of words. I didn't know it, heart for heart, just write down like that.

K: Right. Because you don't say it [unclear]

J: And, exactly. That's, well that's what I had to do. I couldn't even write it down. I said, "I Pledge Allegiance". And I think it's because I hadn't really said it [K: right] in such a long time. And we weren't made to learn it. And I guess that that's another part of North Adams that you know, unless you're really made to learn something, you really don't do it.

K: Has living in North Adams affected the way you speak do you think?

J: Um, not really to a whole lot of extent. But I think that living in North Adams and being from

a city that is put down a lot, it has made me stronger in my opinions that differ from other people. Like if I'm in the minority, I've been able to talk out a lot more I think by living in North Adams and going through the things that we have in our community, than say if I lived somewhere else. Um, especially taking our class this year in history. I just have really found that it's become a lot easier for me to speak out even when I'm in minority, because I've had that experience. You know, whereas in other places I don't think there's as much of that, you know.

K: Do you find that we have like any specific speech patterns. Like you know how California with their Valley Girls. [J: Oh] We don't really have much of that I guess, but.

J: I don't think we really do. I, but then of course I wouldn't notice it, because I'm here. And I, you know, I'm not an outsider. I, I don't really notice anything that's really particular about, about us, except that we don't talk with any kind of a Bostonian accent. [K: Yeah] Um, I can't really think of anything that would put us, set us apart from anybody else.

K: Some people come, "boy I like your accent." You know, [J: I don't have one] you don't, you don't notice that you have one. [J: right, because we live here] It's like, what are you talking about you're the one that has the accent.

J: Well when I go down south um, because I go down there to visit my grandparents, or my gramp and it's, it's so weird because people think of me with the accent. Whereas I, I am listening to all of these people and I'm saying, no wait a minute, this is not right. I'm normal, you are not. [K: Yeah] So that's it, you know. And, and I'm in the minority. I'm one person against fifty thousand. And it's just I don't know. I guess it has so much to do with where you grow up and just the kinds of things that you're, you're brought up with.

side one end

side two begins.

K: Here we are again. How do you feel about the educational system in North Adams?

J: I don't think it's great. I don't think it's the worst, but I don't think it's great. [K: Umhm] Um, especially with the occurrence about the layoff of a whole bunch of teachers now that I feel some of the layoffs are some of the best teachers we have. Um, I don't think the education has been the greatest here. And I can say that I don't think that I would want my children educated here. And I, when, when and if I get married and have children. Um, I've been really lucky because um, teachers always seem to give more attention to me. But I think there's a lot of people that they ignore or are biased to, which is not right. Um, and I think those are a lot of the kids that kind of get shoved off in the corner and don't get as much education as their parents as taxpayers are paying for, and that they deserve even whether they pay for it or not. Um, my elementary school was really good. I really liked that a lot. And even though it was not exactly the typical elementary school, it was more of a, an experimental kind of thing. I really liked it a lot and I learned a lot from the people that were there, because they were learning just as we were. And I think just the fact that I knew that made me more comfortable about what I was learning. [K: Umhm] Um, but I think Middle School was okay. But I didn't really come out of

there with any really totally sound judgement on anything. I mean I knew a lot of facts, but the problem was, and just like with high school, I know a lot of fact but I don't know how to apply them. [K: Right] And how is this going to affect me ten years from now. What am I going to do with this in college? [K: Umhm] And I think that a lot of things are taught to us that we aren't ever going to use. And that's part of education I realize, but I think that they should concentrate on more things that we can use. Such as say, foreign languages and things like that. I think that people should be required to have a minimum of at least two years of a language. I mean absolute minimum. [K: Yeah] I would even say three years. Because you can always use a foreign language. I remember one day I was in Zayre's. And there was a woman who was rapidly speaking some incredible foreign language that I had no idea. [K: Umhm] And the woman she was speaking to was like the manager or something. And she just looked totally dumb founded. And I went up to the foreign language woman, or foreign language, the foreign woman and I just started talking to her. Now she spoke Italian and I don't know Italian, but I know a little bit of French and I know a little bit of Spanish. So I was able to communicate with her. And I think that if the management woman had had some kind of background [K: right] in foreign language then she wouldn't have had a problem. And foreign language is also another way to learn about different cultures, different kinds of people. And not to be so biased about you know, americans in general. And how you know, we are great. Well let's look at some other cultures and see what they're all about. And I think that that um, you know, that's, that's been really hard on our education. And I think that's another reason we're so far behind the world in education. [K: Umhm]

Um, around here education is important, but I don't think the studies are stressed enough. I think they gave us a ton of homework and I don't like it much, but I mean even after Mr. Pecora's classes last year and this year, I mean sometimes I could and I hope you don't hear this Mr. Pecora, but sometimes I could strangle you. But you know, looking back at it all I'm very very thankful, because you know, when I was junior a three page typed paper would take me hours to do. [K: Yeah, oh my god!] It's like what am I going to write? And now it's like, oh, I have a half an hour to do it, oh I can do it. You know, and that's including typing. No problem.

K: Yeah, three pages! Oh, that's crazy!

J: You know? And it's just things like that. I think they should have more classes like that. And I know students would go bonkers and absolutely crazy and their schedules would be insane, but in the long run it's really really worth it. Because I really have found that that has probably been the best class that I've had since my high school, since I got into the high school. And that's why I think that the education isn't so great here, because we don't have more things like that. Um, I understand that when you guys were, you had honors in this right, [K: right] when you were a sophomore? I really wish that I had taken that class. [K: Umhm] Because I've never taken an honors english class before. But I think that I would have learned so much in writing. I can't write anything now for an english teacher, because my writing skills are terrible. And I think that a lot more people should have been pushed harder to take harder courses like that. [K: Right] Instead of say, working, you know? [K: Right] Less stress on working and more stress on education. And I think that's just you know, part of our community and the way that we've been brought up I guess. But um, unless things improve here I wouldn't really want my, my family to be educated here.

K: My parents made my sister take the honors english. [J: Um] And from the beginning she wanted to drop [J: oh yeah], because she just couldn't want to put the time and effort into all the work. [J: Right, umhm] But you know, I told them, I said if she just sticks with it she'll learn how to write, you know? [J: Exactly] She, it's something that she has to do. I mean she's going to get a grade on it. If she doesn't do it she'll get a zero. You know, but if you push her and you make her do it she'll learn [J: right] something from it even if she doesn't [J: I mean what is she going to do, fail?] think she has learned something, you know?

J: Right. Well that's just like when, whenever you're, when you're "listening" to something, [K: right] but not really listening to it, it still gets up into your brain and it floats around for awhile. And eventually it's going to come out.

K: Do you think you've been cheated by the North Adams Educational System in a sense?

J: Um, I think more so other people have than myself, because I always had the initiation [K: yeah] to take like harder courses. And just the person that I am, you know, [K: umhm] I really push hard to be in the honors courses. And even though I was struggling a lot um, I found it rewarding and I really pushed myself. But I don't think that you know, like our group of students are common. I think there's you know, like we're probably, in a class of one hundred and fifty there's proba... we're probably 10%. [K: Right] You know. And that's not, that's not a lot. And um, so I think that other students have been cheated out of [unclear] more so than me. And in a sense I have too, because I don't think that, I think that the school should have a lot of pushing affect too, it shouldn't be all the student. I mean I realize they're the ones getting the education. And you have to put in to an education if you're going to get out of it. But I think that there also has to be encouragement there. And for those people that don't get motivated, which I never used to, I mean what do they do? They just, you know, they don't get what they deserved. [K: Right] So in sense I think I've been cheated. But even more so I think other people have been.

K: Where are you planning to attend college?

J: I'm going to Mt. Holyoke, which is in South Hadley, Mass.

K: Now does your recis...Does your decision reflect your feelings on North Adams? Like leaving the community? Does that have anything to do with where you live?

J: Um, my decision actually had a lot to do with financial aid, but as I'm sure most people's did. [Laughs] [K: Yeah] But I definitely wanted to get away. Um, I also applied to Williams and I didn't get in. But if I had gotten in I don't think that I would have gone there. For the sole fact that I didn't (--) The area is nice and the mountains are beautiful, but you can get them anywhere else. [K: Right] You know? And I, you know, growing here has you know, been special in its ways, but there's nothing really here that I really want to hold on to a lot, besides the good memories. [K: Right] And I just wanted to get away far enough so that I could experience new things, because I don't (--) You know, in a sense I feel sorry for my grandfather, and my grandmother, and my mother who always lived in North Adams and never really had a taste of what else is out there. [K: Yeah, umhm] You know, my mother went to Switzerland when she was in high school and I just, that was like the only time she's ever really gotten out of the

community. And I really envy her for that. Well you know, not jealously or anything like that. [K: Right] But I mean I wish that I could do that. And I think going away to college is, I mean I can't go to Switzerland, but you know, maybe I'll have the opportunity while I'm at the college to go abroad. So it, yeah, it has had an affect I would say.

K: Now if you were to have children would you want them to grow up in North Adams?

J: No. Point blankly, definitely not. [Chuckles]

K: Why not?

J: Um, well because I (--) First of all I, like I said, the education I don't think is that great. But also I think there's a real negative attitude here sometimes about people in general. Um, I think there's a lot of pressure here to always be top notch, number one. Um, you know, you have to do this, you have to do that or you're not going to fit in. Especially in the school system I think that's really true. Um, but I think growing up you have to have a lot of family things, because I think that's what growing up is a lot about. And when I grew up we didn't do a whole lot of family things, because my Mom you know, worked a lot. So we really didn't have a whole lot of time. But even when we did have time there weren't a lot of things available for us to do. And like I said before, I think that's really important for people to be able to do things as a family and to be able to grow. And that's what I want in my family. I don't want to bring up a family where my daughter or son is here or there, at a friends house all the time, never home with the family because there was nothing to do, or because they don't want to be home with their family because they would rather be out running up and down Main Street. You know? So I would definitely rather search out a different, different community to live.

K: Now what other kind of like activities, or programs would you like to see in another community?

J: Um, they had a lot of discussion about this before. Like some kind of uh (--) Well Williamstown had the Youth Center. And I worked there. And I really like that a lot. There are a lot of kids that go there that I would say are not exactly the cream of the crop, but I think that it's a place for them to go when their parents are working. And they really get involved with other kids, other good kids. And they learn about, a lot about themselves and how to share with other people in their communities. So I would like to see something like that for, you know, for kids with parents that, that work a lot. And then some kind of a, I don't know, some kind of a family center. I don't really know what it would be. But just a place for families to go to be able to have a nice bite to eat or something that's not fast food, but that doesn't cost forty dollars for two people.

K: See, we'll say like the YMCA, but you need the membership.

J: Exactly. That's (--) I mean they get you from all sides.

K: Right.

J: You know? My sister, a few years ago for her birthday she wanted a YMCA membership. And I thought, oh, what a geek, why does she want that, you know? [Laughs] And oh wouldn't you know I got one this year! And um, it's just like you know, even, you can do a lot of things there. Workout as a family. [K: Right] But you have to pay two hundred dollars just to get in. [K: Umhm] You know, so I just, I think that there should be more opportunities for family oriented things available to us.

K: And then for North Adams future, with the Mass MoCA coming in, what do you think of that?

J: Um, [K: unclear] I have mixed feelings about that one. I think that it could bring in a lot of money for North Adams, and it could possibly put North Adams back on the map as my grandfather talks about a lot. He has this real vivid imagination that someday North Adams is just going to thrive as an industrious city again. [K: Umhm] Um, but I think there are also cautions that need to be taken. Because I think that with all of the money that's brought in I think this community would go through a total, total change. If Mass MoCA went through there would be a lot of people from say, New York and richer communities that would be coming in. Real estate would climb incredibly high. I mean totally out of this world. Um, kind of like it is here. And I think that it would be harder for the poorer people to survive and easier for the rich people already to survive. I think there would be an even larger gap with something like that coming in. Like I said, I know it would bring money into the community, but I think that it might possibly bring more problems than rewards. It's a good idea and I would kind of like to see it go through, but you know, you can't have your cake and eat it too. I wouldn't want to see the problems that would arise from it.

K: Right. So do you think the poorer could be driven out by high housing costs, because of the environment?

J: I think that would be a very high possibility. Yeah. I think if they did something like that what would happen is they would end up opening um, let's see, some kind of projects, or like I don't know, I'm not putting Brickyard Terrace down or anything, but something like that. Um, where a lot of community housing would occur. And I don't think that that would be very good for the community either, because I think in that sense the haves, say, verses the have nots, the separation would just get even bigger I think if that did go through.

K: Umhm. And the haves wouldn't want the have nots to have anything.

J: Exactly. And it would just, I don't know, it would be a vicious cycle if you ask me.

K: Do you think Mass MoCa can improve the outlook for residence who are unemployed, or underemployed?

J: Um, I wouldn't say very positively, no. Because like I just said, I think that there would be a lot of big whigs that come from different cities. It would help some people, but they talk about all of these jobs that they would create [K: little jobs, right], but they would be the menial tasks. The people that would get the big jobs are the people with the money already. The people that

are going to move from New York, or you know, big parts of different places. It would be those people. It wouldn't be the people that really need the jobs.

K: No do you think the people that are going to come from like New York, will they live in North Adams? Or do you think they'll live like in Williamstown, or other areas?

J: Um, I think they might, I think they probably would, for as of right now I would say they would live in other areas. But I think that as North Adams grew, if it ever did, I think they would eventually start to do that. But I think you'd see a lot of kind of what we're talking about in English right now. I think you'd see a lot of landlords who live in different places, which would create a big problem, because um, uh, the "landlords" would not be able to see their houses. And when things needed to be fixed you know, they'd have tenants complaining and if they don't care, you know, they've got all the money they need. And I think in that sense too it would be really, really hard for the unemployed, or the you know, person that's just trying to make ends meet as it is.

K: Do you think there are any other harmful affects that Mass MoCa could bring?

J: Um, I would just say primarily the gap between the "haves" and "have nots", which is, would really, really widen. And I think that's probably the worst part [K: Umhm] that would happen. Um, although I think beneficially you know, maybe we would get some better education in this place. Maybe we'd have more culture. You know, different kinds of people from different places, with different attitudes and different opinions on things, which would probably be good for North Adams. But I think we have to take care of our community first before we add a bunch of other problems.

K: So do you think the future of North Adams will be a business and industry oriented community, or a tourism and service community?

J: Um, if Mass MoCa goes through I think it would definitely become a tourism community.

K: Especially with the Glen too.

J: Oh, oh with the Glen too, definitely, definitely so. I mean the biggest tourist attraction [K: you knew] in, in how many years now? Um, but I don't, I can't (--) It's hard for me to picture North Adams as really being industrious, or big business. [K: right] I just, I just can't imagine it as being something like that. I just, I have trouble with that one. Um, I think we might be able to do better. We might be able to get out, you know, get on our feet a little bit more and have um, a little bit stronger foundation. But I just can't ever picture North Adams as a big industrial city that would you know, never any big metropolis or anything like that.

K: Do you think the little businesses will benefit from ever coming of Mass MoCa and the Glen?

J: Oh, um, yeah I kind of think so, because being a tourist place, I mean you know, tourists come from everywhere. They want to see everything and everything done differently. I think

those little shops have, you know, they have originality and they have a lot of doing things on their own. And I think I guess they would. But I think with the Mass MoCA I think also that a lot of smaller business will probably end up opening, which would be bad for competition, because now there would be three fast food places, [K: right] instead of two looking for a bunch of tourists. And in that sense I think that that would kind of create a problem. But small businesses probably would end up benefiting [rest of comment unclear].

K: But the North Adams Inn would benefit, or they'd probably stay open.

J: Oh I'm sure that is opens for a whole year this time.

K: Yeah. It might even last a little while.

J: I don't think we even have an Inn or a hotel in North Adams, do we?

K: Just the North Adams Inn.

J: And it's not even opened.

K: And which is, I think it's going to be opening.

J: Are you serious?

K: Well the movie place downstairs is opening at the end of the month or something.

J: Oh yeah! That, that opens and closes like I break my fingernails. I mean [both laugh], it's so bad. [Unclear] I don't know.

K: So can you think of anything else that you'd like to say about North Adams? [J: Um] That's polite.

J: No, I wouldn't say that. Um, at least not on tape. North Adams has been a very interesting place to grow up. I've seen a lot of different people, a lot of different cultures and things that are here. A lot of different groups of people. Um, you know, we've seen all sorts. And that's one thing that I do have to say that, that is good about our community. That, that we do have a lot of individuals, which I think is, is good. Um, I think we need to learn that we need to stand up more for what we believe in and be able to stick to things like that. Because being a big city I think it's, that makes it hard for a lot of people to do that. Um, but it's kind of a personal place too, because I mean even from elementary school I can remember practically all of the people I was in school with. And maybe that's a natural phenomenon, but I really don't think that it is. Because I think that if you ask other people from other communities who they were in kindergarten with they probably could name two or three people. And you know, I've been with these people for most, most of the years that I've known them, you know, from elementary school on up to high school. [K: Umhm] And especially with bigger communities you know, they might all start at the same elementary school, but then you get four or five different secondary and high schools. [K: Right] Or they might never see each other again. And I just

kind of think that that's kind of neat about North Adams, because you know, everybody kind of knows who everybody is. And who's this person, who's that person. What's in, what's out. [K: Right] You know, what's here and what's not. And that's, that's kind of one thing about North Adams that I do in a way like, and in a way not like, because you can't have any secrets in North Adams. [K: Yeah] Even though it is such a large community. But I don't know. I'm, I guess I'm kind of glad that I grew up here. I wish I had a little that maybe I should, could have gotten, but I'm, I'm pretty satisfied with it I guess, you know.

K: Just in closing do you think you'll miss North Adams, like in the future when you're thirty, or forty?

J: I might want to come back to visit, [K: yeah] and stay over in the North Adams Inn if it's actually open, but, or maybe I'll go over to the Orchards instead. [Both chuckle] Um, but I don't think I'll really miss it a whole lot. I think what I'll miss is the people. [K: Yeah] Because people have really been a special part of my life even since I've grown up. Because it's always been the people that have made North Adams for me, not North Adams. [K: Umhm] Um, and that's what I'll miss. And um, but I you know, like Mr. Pecora was saying the other day, there isn't really anything like special here that makes our city unique. [K: Yeah] Like there's no like, nobody that's been doing one particularly thing since the beginning of time. [K: Umhm] Everything has changed. And I remember, excuse me, looking at a couple of photographs of Old North Adams. And it's hard for me to understand and comprehend how Old North Adams has become what it has today. I mean it's really, really incredible and mind boggling. And I wish that there was something here that I could really remember it by. And I wish there were something that I really wanted to remember it by. But there just really isn't, really isn't a whole lot.

K: Twenty years down the road you can bring your kids here to see Mass MoCA [J: laughs], and the Glen to go skiing.

J: Yeah, we can go skiing over at the Glen, you know. [Chuckles] [K: All right] Well, I guess that's it.

K: Thank you. I guess this is the end.

TAPE ENDS